

"COATING COMPOSITION FOR THERMOPLASTIC
RESIN PARTICLES FOR FORMING FOAM CONTAINERS"

5 BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the invention

 The present invention relates to thermoplastic resin particles for forming foam containers, such as cups, bowls, etc.; to a molded article, e.g. foam container made from the resin particles; to a coating composition for the thermoplastic resin particles; and to a method for improving the resistance to leakage of a foam container. More particularly, the present invention pertains to a coating composition for expandable or pre-expanded, i.e. "pre-puff", thermoplastic resin particles, e.g. polystyrene, used in molding containers for carrying liquids, e.g. coffee or foods containing oil and/or fat components such as precooked (instant noodles, soups, sauces, fried chicken) fat-containing foods, and the like.

2. Background Art

 The manufacture of molded articles, e.g. containers, e.g. cups, bowls, made from expandable thermoplastic particles is well known. The most commonly used thermoplastic particles are expandable polystyrene particles, referred to as "EPS" particles. Typically, polystyrene beads are impregnated with a blowing agent, which boils below the softening point of the polystyrene and causes the impregnated beads to expand when they are heated. When the pre-expanded beads are heated in a mold cavity, they further expand to fill the cavity and fuse together to form a shaped article, e.g. containers, e.g. cups, bowls, etc.

5 The formation of molded articles from
impregnated polystyrene beads is generally done in
two steps. First, the impregnated polystyrene beads
are pre-expanded to a density of from about 2 to 12
pounds per cubic foot. The pre-expanded beads are
10 typically called "pre-puff". This first step, i.e.
the pre-expansion step, is conventionally carried
out by heating the impregnated beads using any
conventional heating medium such as steam, hot air,
hot water, or radiant heat. Second, the pre-
15 expanded beads ("pre-puff") are heated in a closed
mold to further expand the pre-expanded beads to
form a fused article having the shape of the mold.
This latter step is generally referred to as
molding.

20 The expandable polystyrene particles used to
make foam containers are generally prepared by an
aqueous suspension polymerization process, which
results in beads that can be screened to relatively
precise bead sizes. Typically, bead diameters are
25 within the range of from about 0.008 to about 0.02
inch. Occasionally, cups are made from particles
having bead diameters as much as 0.03 inches.

 In spite of careful bead size control, one
problem, which continues to plague the container,
30 industry is that after a period of time the EPS
containers have a tendency to leak coffee or to leak
the oil and/or fat components in food substances
carried by the containers. That is, the coffee or
the oil and/or fat permeate around the fused
35 polystyrene beads and through the wall of the
container. With regard to the oil and/or fat

5 components, a stain generally forms on the outer surface of the container.

Several approaches have evolved over the years directed toward the reduction of leakage in containers for retaining liquids and/or pre-cooked
10 foods.

Amberg et al., U.S. Patent 4,036,675 discloses a container made from foamed polystyrene, which is lined on one or both sides with unoriented polyolefin film, preferably polypropylene. The film
15 is secured to the foamed plastic base material using a vinylic polymer or polyamide resin as a heat-sensitive adhesive. The film is coated with a wet adhesive and dried before laminating the film to the foam material.

20 Sonnenberg U.S. Patent Nos. 4,703,065 and 4,720,429 disclose thermoplastic polymer foam cups for retaining coffee that are molded from thermoplastic polymer particles whose surfaces are coated with a fluorosurfactant before molding.

25 Sonnenberg U.S. Patent No. 4,785,022 discloses a method for enhancing the coffee retention of molded foam cups. The method involves coating the expandable polystyrene particles with various rubber polymers and copolymers, e.g. polybutene,
30 polyisobutylene, isobutylene-butene copolymer and butene-ethylene copolymer.

Arch, et al. U.S. Patent No. 4,798,749 and U.S. Patent No. 4,840,759 overcome the problem of coffee leakage by replacing conventional blowing agents
35 such as butanes, n-pentane, hexanes, and the

5 halogenated hydrocarbons with isopentane in the expandable styrene polymer particles.

Ikeda, et al., U.S. Patent No. 4,698,367 discloses expandable thermoplastic resin particles composed of a fluorinated vinyl polymer and a hydrophilic vinyl polymer that covers or is included on the surface or in the surface layer of the expandable thermoplastic particle. These resin particles are useful for producing package containers for oily or fatty foods.

15 Sakoda et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,277,491 B1 discloses coating the surface of the resin beads or incorporating resin beads with a fluorine-containing block copolymer comprising a fluorine-containing vinyl-type polymer segment derived from a fluorine-containing vinyl-type monomer and a lipophilic vinyl-type polymer segment derived from a lipophilic vinyl-type monomer.

Suzuki et al., U.S. Patent No. 4,206,249 discloses a process for producing a paper container having high impermeability to liquid which comprises spray coating a polymerizable solution containing a pre-polymer onto a wall surface of a paper container and irradiating the coated wall with ultraviolet light to effect the setting of the pre-polymer on the wall surface of the container. This forms a coating, which is impermeable to liquids, such as water, milk, soft drinks, oils, etc.

Breining, et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,416,829 B2 discloses a heat insulating paper cup where the body member is coated on its outside surface with a foamed low density polyethylene, and on its inside

5 surface with an unfoamed modified low density
polyethylene.

Japan Unexamined Patent Publication

JP2002338725A (Kaneka Corporation) discloses the use
of a volatile foaming agent containing 30 to 60% by
10 weight based on the foaming agent of isopentane.

The expandable polystyrene resin particles are
covered with zinc stearate ranging between 0.2 to
0.5 parts by weight based on 100 parts by weight of
resin particle. The amount of foaming agent ranges
15 from 0 to 5.5% by weight of the resin particles.

None of the thermoplastic resin particles of the
prior art for making foam containers are coated or
covered with a liquid polyethylene glycol and then
with one or more components selected from the group
20 consisting of polyolefin wax, e.g. polyethylene wax;
a metal salt of higher fatty acids, e.g. zinc
stearate; polyethylene glycol; and a fatty bisamide
or fatty amide, e.g. ethylene bis-stearamide, for
reducing or eliminating the penetration of liquid
25 and/or oil and/or fat components of food items such
as coffee, noodles, soups, sauces, stews, meats, and
the like through the foam containers.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The invention meets the above need. The
30 invention particularly relates to expandable
thermoplastic particles, preferably polystyrene
particles, for making molded articles, e.g. foam
containers, e.g. bowls, cups, etc., which containers
adequately retain oils and flavorings in food items
35 such as instant noodles, etc., and liquids such as

5 hot coffee or hot water added to food items such as instant soups or noodles, stews, meats or the like.

Expandable or pre-expanded (sometimes referred to as "pre-puff") thermoplastic particles are coated or covered with a coating composition. The resultant
10 containers are less pervious to leakage and/or stains caused by liquids and/or oily and fatty foods.

The coating composition essentially comprises two parts, 1) a liquid part and 2) a powder or solid
15 part. The liquid part comprises a) greater than about 0.01% by weight, based on the weight of the particles, of polyethylene glycol having an average molecular weight ranging from about 200 to about 800 (PEG 200- PEG 800), and the solid part comprises
20 components selected from the group consisting of: b) greater than about 0.01% by weight, based on the weight of the particles, of polyolefin wax; c) greater than about 0.01%, based on the weight of the particles, of a metal salt of higher fatty acids; d)
25 greater than about 0.01%, based on the weight of the particles, of polyethylene glycol having an average molecular weight ranging from 900 to about 10,000 (PEG 900- PEG 10,000), and e) greater than about 0.01%, based on the weight of the particles, of a
30 fatty bisamide or fatty amide, e.g. ethylene bis-stearamide, and combinations of b) through e).

For expandable particles, it is preferable to use component a) and one or more of components b) through e). For pre-expanded or "pre-puff"
35 particles, component a) is optional, and one or more of components b) through e) are used.

5 A preferred embodiment is a coating composition comprising a) about 0.30% by weight of polyethylene glycol having an average molecular weight of 400 (PEG 400 in liquid form); b) about 0.40% by weight of polyolefin wax, preferably polyethylene wax, and
10 c) about 0.105% by weight of a metal salt of higher fatty acid, preferably zinc stearate.

 Preferably, expandable thermoplastic particles are first coated with the liquid polyethylene glycol and then coated with the solid components of the
15 coating composition of the invention. The solid components preferably are mixed or blended together and then mixed or blended with the thermoplastic particles. For pre-expanded particles, as stated hereinabove, the use of the liquid polyethylene
20 glycol is optional. The solid components preferably are mixed or blended together and then mixed or blended with the thermoplastic particles.

 The invention also relates to a method for improving the resistance to leakage of molded
25 articles, e.g. foam containers, e.g. cups, bowls, etc. made from thermoplastic resin particles. The method involves, preferably for expandable particles, first applying component a) to the particles and then applying one or more of the solid
30 components of the coating composition to the expandable particles. For pre-expanded particles, the method involves, optionally applying component a) to the particles, and applying one or more of the solid components of the coating composition to the
35 pre-expanded particles.

5 It is therefore an object of the present
invention to provide molded articles, e.g. foam
containers which exhibit improved resistance to
leakage and therefore improved resistance to stain
at least on the outer surface of the containers, and
10 which exhibit improved mechanical properties, such
as improved rim strength.

 It is a further object of the present invention
to provide a coating composition for thermoplastic
particles used to form foam containers that are
15 suitable for retaining oily or fatty food items,
such as noodles, soups, sauces, stews, meats, and
the like, or for retaining liquids such as hot
coffee or hot water for instant noodles, soups,
stews, etc., and which foam container has at least
20 improved ATF properties and/or improved rim strength
properties.

 A still further object of the present invention
is to provide expandable or pre-expanded
thermoplastic particles comprising a coating
25 composition, which increases the integrity of foam
articles made from the particles.

 And yet a still further object of the present
invention is to provide a method for improving the
resistance to leakage of a foam container by
30 providing a coating composition for coating
thermoplastic resin particles used to form the foam
container.

 These and other object of the present invention
will be better appreciated and understood by those
35 skilled in the art from the following description
and appended claims.

5 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

 As used herein, the term "coat" means to
contact with a coating composition so as to place a
substantial portion of the components of the coating
composition of the invention on or near the surface
10 or surfaces of the resin particles being contacted.

 As used herein, the term "cover" means
principally in the form in which the coating
composition adheres in layers on the surface of the
resin particles.

15 The coating composition of the invention
essentially comprises two parts, 1) a liquid part
and 2) a powder or solid part. The liquid part
comprises a) greater than about 0.01% by weight,
based on the weight of the particles, of
20 polyethylene glycol having an average molecular
weight ranging from about 200 to about 800 (PEG 200-
PEG 800). Preferably, the weight percent of the
liquid polyethylene glycol is 0.01% by weight to
about 0.80% by weight, based on the weight of the
25 particles. The solid part of the coating
composition of the invention comprises components
selected from the group consisting of: b) greater
than about 0.01% and, preferably 0.01% to about 1.0%
by weight, based on the weight of the particles, of
30 polyolefin wax, preferably polyethylene wax; c)
greater than about 0.01%, and preferably 0.01% to
about 0.60% by weight, based on the weight of the
particles, of a metal salt of higher fatty acid,
preferably zinc stearate; d) greater than about
35 0.01%, and preferably 0.01% to about 0.80% by
weight, based on the weight of the particles, of

5 polyethylene glycol having an average molecular weight ranging from 900 to about 10,000 (PEG 900-PEG 10,000), and e) greater than about 0.01%, and preferably 0.01% to 1.0% by weight, based on the weight of the particles, of a fatty amide or fatty
10 bisamide, e.g. ethylene bis-stearamide, and combinations of components b) through e).

For expandable beads, i.e. dense beads, the coating composition preferably comprises component a) and at least one or more of components b) through
15 e) in combination with component a). For example, the combinations may be comprised of components a) and b); or components a) and c); or components a) and d); or components a) and e); or components a), b), and c); or components a), c), and d); or
20 components a), b), and d); or components a), b), and e); or components a), c), and e); or components a), d), and e); or components a), b), c), and d); or components a), b), c), and e); or components a), c), d), and e); or
25 components a), b), c), d), and e).

For pre-expanded particles or "pre-puff" particles, the liquid part is not necessary but in some instances may be preferred, for reasons discussed herein below. For the pre-expanded
30 particles, the solid part of the coating composition will comprise at least of one or more of components b) through e), which may be in combinations similar to those listed in the preceding paragraph for expandable particles.

35 Any of components a) through e) must be present in an amount greater than or equal to 0.01% by

5 weight, if used alone. If component b) is used it
should be present in an amount that is at least
0.01% to about 1.0% by weight, based on the weight
of the particles. If component d) is used it should
be present in an amount that is at least 0.01% to
10 about 0.8% by weight, based on the weight of the
particles. If components b) and d) are used, then
preferably both components b) and d) would be
present to give a combined weight percent of about
0.01 to about 1.8% by weight based on the weight of
15 the particles. This is an example of a desirable
total weight percentage for a combination of
components b) and d). Desirable total weight
percentages for other combinations of components b)
through e) will be apparent to those skilled in the
20 art.

The expandable, and therefore, the pre-expanded
thermoplastic particles can be made from any
suitable thermoplastic homopolymer or copolymer.
Particularly suitable for use are homopolymers
25 derived from vinyl aromatic monomers including
styrene, isopropylstyrene, alpha-methylstyrene,
nuclear methylstyrenes, chlorostyrene, tert-
butylstyrene, and the like, as well as copolymers
prepared by the copolymerization of at least one
30 vinyl aromatic monomer with monomers such as
divinylbenzene, butadiene, alkyl methacrylates,
alkyl acrylates, acrylonitrile, and maleic
anhydride, wherein the vinyl aromatic monomer is
present in at least 50% by weight of the copolymer.
35 Styrenic polymers are preferred, particularly
polystyrene. However, other suitable polymers may

5 be used, such as polyolefin, e.g. polyethylene,
polypropylene, and mixtures thereof.

 In the embodiments herein, the expandable
thermoplastic particles are expandable polystyrene
(EPS) particles. These particles can be in the form
10 of beads, granules, or other particles convenient
for the expansion and molding operations. Particles
polymerized in an aqueous suspension process are
essentially spherical and are preferred for molding
or forming the foam container of the invention.
15 These particles are typically screened so that their
size ranges from about 0.008 to about 0.02 inch, and
in some instances ranges from about 0.008 to about
0.03 inch.

 The thermoplastic particles are impregnated
20 using any conventional method with a suitable
blowing agent. For example, the impregnation can be
achieved by adding the blowing agent to the aqueous
suspension during the polymerization of the polymer,
or alternatively by re-suspending the polymer
25 particles in an aqueous medium and then
incorporating the blowing agent as taught in U.S.
Patent No. 2,983,692 to D. Alelio. Any gaseous
material or material which will produce gases on
heating can be used as the blowing agent.

30 In the present invention, the blowing agent can
be aliphatic hydrocarbons, such as acetone, methyl
acetate, butane, n-pentane, cyclopentane,
isopentane, isobutene, neopentane, and mixtures
thereof. A preferred blowing agent is normal
35 pentane and mixtures of pentanes i.e. normal
pentane, isopentane and/or cyclopentane. Other

5 blowing agents that can be used in the invention are
halogenated hydrocarbons, e.g. HFC's, CFC's and
HCFC'S, and mixtures thereof. For the expandable
particles of the invention, any of the preceding
blowing agents may also be used in combination with
10 carbon dioxide, air, nitrogen, and water.

 The blowing agent level of the polymer
particles generally will be less than 10.0 weight
percent, preferably, less than 9.0 weight percent,
and most preferably will range from between about
15 3.0 weight percent to about 6.0 weight percent based
on the weight of the thermoplastic resin
composition.

 Alternatively, water can be blended with the
aliphatic hydrocarbons blowing agents or water can
20 be used as the sole blowing agent as taught in U.S.
Patent Nos. 6,127,439; 6,160,027; and 6,242,540
assigned to NOVA Chemicals (International) S.A. In
these patents, water-retaining agents are used. The
weight percentage of water for use as the blowing
25 agent can range from 1 to 20%. U.S. Patent Nos.
6,127,439, 6,160,027 and 6,242,540 in their entirety
are incorporated herein by reference.

 The impregnated thermoplastic particles can be
foamed cellular polymer particles as taught in Arch
30 et al. U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 10/021,716
assigned to NOVA Chemicals Inc. The foamed cellular
particles are preferably polystyrene that are pre-
expanded to a density of from about 12.5 to about
34.3 pounds per cubic foot, and which contain a
35 volatile blowing agent level that is less than 6.0
wt %, preferably ranging from about 2.0 wt % to

5 about 5.0 wt %, and more preferably ranging from
about 2.5 wt % to about 3.5 wt %, based on the
weight of the polymer.

10 The impregnated expandable thermoplastic
particles are generally pre-expanded to a density of
from about 2 to about 12 pounds per cubic foot prior
to molding. The pre-expansion step is carried out
conventionally by heating the impregnated beads via
any conventional heating medium, e.g. steam, hot
air, hot water, or radiant heat. One generally
15 accepted method for accomplishing the pre-expansion
of impregnated thermoplastic particles is taught in
U.S. Patent No. 3,023,175 to Rodman.

20 The pre-expanded beads are heated in a closed
mold to further expand the pre-expanded particles to
form a foam article, i.e. container.

25 In an embodiment of the invention, expandable,
i.e. impregnated thermoplastic particles are covered
or coated with component a), the liquid polyethylene
glycol, and then covered or coated with the solid
components of the coating composition of the
invention prior to the particles being subjected to
pre-expansion and molding steps. Any conventional
method of coating or covering particles may be
utilized in the invention.

30 In a further embodiment of the invention, the
expandable particles are pre-expanded and the pre-
expanded thermoplastic particles are coated or
covered with the liquid polyethylene glycol and then
coated or covered with the solid components of the
coating composition of the invention prior to the
35 particles being subjected to the molding step.

5 It is to be understood that in some instances
the pre-expanded particles do not need to be coated
with the liquid polyethylene glycol in that the pre-
expanded particles generally have a rougher surface
10 finish and a greater surface area for the adherence
of the solid components of the coating composition
compared to expandable particles that generally have
a smooth surface finish and less surface area.
However, it has been found by the inventors that the
liquid polyethylene glycol tends to lessen the
15 static electricity generally associated with pre-
puff particles, especially during the conveyance of
these particles via air flow from one piece of plant
equipment to another piece of plant equipment.
Thus, the application of the liquid polyethylene
20 glycol on pre-expanded or pre-puff particles may be
desirable in some instances.

 The liquid polyethylene glycol and the solid
components of the coating composition cover or coat
or can be included on the surfaces of the expandable
25 thermoplastic resin particles. As stated herein
above, the term "cover" means principally in the
form in which the coating composition adheres in
layers on the surface of the resin particles. This
can be achieved by first contacting the resin
30 particles with the liquid polyethylene glycol and
then sufficiently mixing the resin particles with
the solid components of the coating composition in a
mixer, such as a drum blender, ribbon blender, V
blender, Henschel mixer, Ledage mixer, a high
35 intensity mixer, a low intensity blender, and the
like.

5 The solid components of the coating composition preferably are in powder form. However, the powder form may be made into liquid form by dissolving the powder in solvent or dispersing the powder in water.

10 Preferably, the thermoplastic particles are contacted first with the liquid polyethylene glycol and then contacted with one or more of the solid components of the coating composition of the invention, as discussed herein above. The solid components preferably are mixed or blended together and then blended or mixed with the thermoplastic particles.

15 The polyolefin wax of component b) is selected from the group consisting of polyethylene wax and polypropylene wax, and preferably is polyethylene wax. The polyolefin wax has an average molecular weight of about 650 to about 30,000; preferably is in powder form; and has a particle size ranging from about 1 to about 140 microns in diameter, preferably, about 6 microns.

25 The metal salt of higher fatty acids used as component c) in the coating composition is selected from the group consisting of zinc, magnesium, calcium or aluminum salts of stearic, lauric or myristic acid, of which zinc stearate is preferable.

30 For a preferred embodiment the coating composition of the invention comprises: component a), polyethylene glycol, in an amount of about 0.30% by weight, based on the weight of the particles, and having an average molecular weight of about 400 (PEG 400 in liquid form); component b), polyolefin wax, preferably polyethylene wax, in an amount of about

35

5 0.40% by weight, based on the weight of the
particles, and having a particle size of about 6
microns and an average molecular weight of 1,000;
and component c), a metal salt of higher fatty
acids, preferably zinc stearate, in an amount of
10 about 0.105% by weight, based on the weight of the
particles.

 In applying the coating composition to the
particles, as stated herein above, it is preferable
to first cover the resin particles with liquid
15 polyethylene glycol, which is believed to modify the
surface tension, i.e. make the surface more
hydrophilic, and which is an adhering agent for the
coating composition, and then to cover the resin
particles with the solid components of the coating
20 composition.

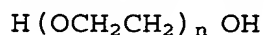
 Preferably, the liquid polyethylene glycol has
an average molecular weight of about 200 to about
800 (PEG 200-PEG 800), and preferably, has an
average molecular weight ranging from about 300 to
25 about 600. In general, the number appearing after
the designation "PEG" (polyethylene glycol)
indicates the average molecular weight, e.g. PEG 200
represents polyethylene glycol with an average
molecular weight of about 200, etc.

30 The amount of liquid polyethylene glycol is
greater than 0.01 and preferably is 0.01% to about
0.80% by weight, based on the weight of the
particles, and preferably ranges from about 0.05 to
about 0.50% by weight, based on the weight of the
35 particles.

5 The coating composition covers the
thermoplastic resin particles preferably in an
amount of 0.005 to 2.0% by weight based on the
weight of the particles, and more preferably 0.01 to
1.0% by weight, based on the weight of the
10 thermoplastic resin particles. If the coverage of
the coating composition is less than 0.005% by
weight, the effect of the prevention of leakage of
the liquid or fatty/oil components of the container
is generally insufficient, and if the coverage
15 exceeds 2.0% by weight, there may be a tendency to
increase the amount of lumping in the pre-expansion
of the particles or there may be a tendency to
retard the fusing together of the thermoplastic
particles in the molding process.

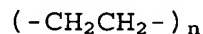
20 A method of the invention relates to the
expandable and optionally pre-expanded thermoplastic
particles first being coated with the component a),
i.e. the liquid polyethylene glycol e.g. PEG 400,
component, and then blending the particles with a
25 mixture of the solid coating composition. If the
coating composition is applied to expandable
thermoplastic particles, these particles are then
pre-expanded, and fed to the mold. If the coating
composition is applied to pre-expanded thermoplastic
30 particles, these particles are then fed to the mold.

Polyethylene glycols suitable for use in the
coating composition of the invention are represented
by the following general formula:



5 Polyethylene glycols having the above general formula are commercially available from BASF under the trademark PLURACOL®.

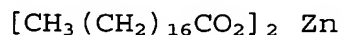
Polyethylene waxes suitable for use in the coating composition of the invention are represented by the following general formula:



Polyethylene waxes having the above general formula are commercially available from Baker Petrolite under the trademark PETROLITE®.

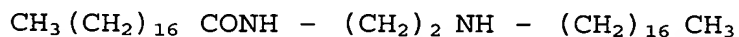
15 Preferably, polyethylene waxes having an average molecular weight ranging from about 650 to about 30,000 and a particle size ranging between 1 micron and 140 microns are used in the coating composition of the invention.

20 Zinc stearates suitable for use in the coating composition of the invention are represented by the following general formula:



25 Zinc stearates having the above general formula are commercially available from Ferro under the trademark SYNPRO®.

Ethylene bis-stearamides suitable for use in the coating composition of the invention are represented by the following general formula:



30 Ethylene bis-stearamide having the above general formula are commercially available from the Crompton Corporation under the trademark KEMAMIDE® W-40.

35 In addition to substantially coating or covering the thermoplastic resin particles with the

5 coating composition of the invention, an alternate approach is to add the coating composition at the time of impregnating the thermoplastic resin particles with a blowing agent to retain the coating composition in the surface layer of the resin beads.

10 Preferably, the entire surface of the thermoplastic resin particles is to be coated or covered with a thin film or layer of the coating composition. However, it may be adequate for the purposes of the invention if only a portion of the
15 surfaces of the particles is coated or covered with the coating composition of the invention.

The foam container may be a polystyrene cup that may be fabricated by a conventional cup-forming machine that has an inner shell and an outer shell.
20 An example of this type of machine is MODEL 6-VLC-125 machine made by Autonational B.V. Impregnated thermoplastic particles are either aged or un-aged, are coated with the coating composition, are pre-expanded, and are then fed to a conventional cup-forming machine.
25

The cup fabrication rate for a single machine (6 molds) producing 10-ounce cups or 16-ounce cups can range from about 30 to 100 cups per minute. Several machines can be used to increase the
30 production rate.

It has been found that the coating composition also tends to improve the rim strength of the container, which in effect, improves the overall strength of the container. The rim strength is a
35 measure of the force required (in kilograms) to

5 cause the rim to crumble a one-fourth inch
displacement from the opened edge of the container.

 The invention is further illustrated, but not
limited by, the following examples.

Examples

Examples 1-4

10 For Examples 1-4, expandable polystyrene beads
(NOVA Chemical F271TU or F-271T) were first blended
with component a) liquid polyethylene glycol 400
(PEG 400) in a drum mixer. These PEG coated beads
15 were then coated with the coating composition
comprising the following components: polyethylene
glycol 8000 (PEG 8000); and/or polyethylene wax (PE
1000 T6); and/or zinc stearate (ZnS) in the amounts
shown in Tables 1-4. The designation PE 1000 T6 for
20 the polyethylene wax indicates that the polyethylene
wax has an average molecular weight of about 1000
and a particle size of about 6 microns. This
polyethylene wax, PE 1000 T6 is available from the
Baker Petrolite Corporation under the trademark
25 PETROLITE®.

Example 1

 Five samples (I-V) were prepared by the
following procedure:

30 3.8 pounds of impregnated NOVA Chemicals F271TU
(expandable polystyrene) cup beads, ranging from
0.010 to 0.020 inch in diameter and containing 5.6%
by weight, based on the weight of the particles, of
mixed pentane (n-pentane and isopentane in the ratio
of 90:10), and for samples (II-V), liquid PEG 400 in
35 the amounts shown in Table 1 were stir blended in a
drum container for 5 minutes. The components of the

5 solid part of the coating composition in the amounts
shown in Table 1 were added to the mixture and the
contents were further blended for another 5 minutes.

 The impregnated, coated beads were pre-expanded
in an 11-gallon Rodman Steam pre-expander (Artisan
10 Industries Inc.) at atmospheric pressure. The pre-
expansion was operated batch wise with a target pre-
puff density of 4.0 pounds per cubic foot (pcf).
The newly prepared pre-puff was air dried for 5
minutes to remove the moisture and was allowed to
15 age for about 4 hours before molding.

 Ten-ounce cups were molded using the aforesaid
Autonational Cup Machine Model 6VLC-125 (standard
molding conditions) and using the pre-expanded beads
with the densities indicated in Table 1. The steam
20 header pressure was 100 pounds per square inch (psi)
and the total cycle time was about 12 seconds. The
molded cups were allowed to age overnight before
testing.

 Four cups for each sample (I-V) were tested by
25 the following method: 1) Since the upper portion of
the cup is the most vulnerable area for leakage,
testing was done in this area. A circular piece of
molded EPS material was placed down into each cup so
that the upper 20% to 30% of the cup was made
30 available for testing. 2) 15 grams of oil-fried
pasta were crushed and spread evenly on the circular
piece of molded EPS material so that the pasta
occupied the upper 20 to 30% of the cup. 3) 3 grams
of red pepper powder were spread evenly onto the
35 crushed pasta. 4) Each cup was tightly sealed with
an adhesive label and plastic stretch film and

placed in an oven at a temperature of 149°F (65°C).
5) Each sample was checked for stains first every hour during a 7 hour period and then once every 8 hours until failure for a maximum of 3 days.

The average time to failure (ATF) for each cup group sampling was calculated by adding the time to failure for each container and dividing the total time by the number of containers that were tested. The maximum ATF value of 72 hours represents that none of the cups for the cup group sampling exhibited any stain or leakage. The minimum ATF value of 1 hour represents that all of the cups in the cup group sampling failed within the first 1 hour.

Each cup in each cup group sampling (10 cups in each of these group samplings) was tested for rim strength (force applied on the cup rim at ¼ inch displacement) and the average force was recorded.

The results for the stain resistance and rim strength are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Sample	I (Control)	II	III	IV	V
PEG 400 (g)	---	5.17	3.50	3.50	0.90
PE 1000 T6 (g)	---	6.89	9.00	12.00	18.00
PEG 8000 (g)	---	---	---	---	---
ZnS (g)	1.80	1.80	1.80	---	---
Density (pcf)	3.96	3.95	4.08	4.11	4.15
Rim Strength (kg)	0.286	0.316	0.330	0.312	0.327
ATF (hour)	1.5	72	25	37.5	14

As Table 1 indicates, cups formed with impregnated polystyrene particles that were coated or covered with the coating composition of the invention (Samples II-V) had improved rim strength

5 and improved ATF compared to the control cups
(Sample I) that were formed with particles coated
only with zinc stearate.

Example 2

10 The procedure of Example 1 was repeated using
the amounts and components shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Sample	I (Control)	VI	VII	VIII
PEG 400 (g)	---	0.60	3.50	3.45
PE 1000 T6(g)	---	---	---	---
PEG 8000 (g)	---	---	---	5.17
ZnS (g)	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80
Density (pcf)	3.96	3.95	4.05	3.84
Rim Strength (kg)	0.286	0.298	0.323	0.307
ATF (hour)	1.5	1.0	3	27

15 As Table 2 indicates, cups (Samples VI-VIII)
formed with impregnated polystyrene particles coated
or covered with the coating composition of the
invention had improved rim strength and in general
improved ATF compared to the control cups (Sample I)
that were formed with particles coated solely with
zinc stearate.

Example 3

20 The procedure of Example 1 was repeated except
that the expandable polystyrene beads were
substituted with beads containing 5.6% by weight,
based on the weight of the beads, of normal pentane
25 as the sole blowing agent.

Table 3

Sample	IX (Control)	X	XI	XII	XIII
PEG 400 (g)	---	5.17	3.50	3.50	3.45
PE 1000 T6 (g)	---	6.89	---	12.00	8.62
PEG 8000 (g)	---	---	---	---	---
ZnS (g)	1.80	1.80	1.80	---	1.80
Density (pcf)	3.81	4.06	3.96	4.31	4.06
Rim Strength (kg)	0.306	0.328	0.316	0.328	0.336
ATF (hour)	1.5	28	2	23	15

As Table 3 indicates, cups formed with polystyrene particles impregnated with 5.6% by weight, based on the weight of the particles, of normal pentane as the sole blowing agent and that were coated or covered with the coating composition of the invention (Samples X through XIII) had improved rim strength and improved ATF compared to the control cups (Sample IX) that were coated solely with zinc stearate.

15

Example 4

The procedure of Example 3 was repeated except that the expandable polystyrene beads were substituted with beads containing 5.65% by weight, based on the weight of beads, of normal pentane as the sole blowing agent and that were pre-lubricated with 0.0225% by weight silicon oil. The beads were coated or covered with the components in the amounts shown in Table 4.

20

Table 4

Sample	XIV (Control)	XV
PEG 400 (g)	---	5.17
PE 1000 T6 (g)	---	6.89
PEG 8000 (g)	---	---
ZnS (g)	1.80	1.80
Density (pcf)	3.98	4.13
Rim Strength (kg)	0.309	0.330
ATF (hour)	1.5	19

5 As Table 4 indicates, the cups formed with the
expandable polystyrene particles having 5.6% by
weight, based on the weight of the beads, of normal
pentane as the sole blowing agent and that were
coated or covered with the coating composition of
10 the invention (Sample XV) had improved ATF and
improved rim strength compared to the control cups
(Sample XIV) that were formed with beads coated only
with zinc stearate.

Example 5

15 3.8 pounds of impregnated NOVA Chemicals F271TU
(expandable polystyrene) cup beads, ranging from
0.010 to 0.020 inch in diameter and containing 5.6%
by weight, based on the weight of the beads, of
normal pentane and 1.80 grams of zinc stearate were
20 stir blended in a drum container for 5 minutes. The
impregnated zinc stearate coated beads were pre-
expanded in an 11-gallon Rodman Steam pre-expander
(Artisan Industries Inc.) at atmospheric pressure.
The pre-expansion was operated batch wise with a
25 target pre-puff density of 4.0 pounds per cubic foot
(pcf). The newly prepared pre-puff was air dried
for 5 minutes to remove the moisture and was allowed
to age for about 4 hours. 0.65 pounds of the pre-
puff beads were stir blended with 2.95 grams
30 polyethylene wax (PE 1000 T6) for 5 minutes. The
coated pre-puff beads were molded using Autonational
Cup Machine Model 6VLC-125 (standard molding
conditions). The cup molding, the stain testing,
and the rim strength testing were done similar to
35 that for Examples 1-4. The formulations and test
results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Sample	XVI (Control)	XVII
Bead Lubrication		
Bead Weight (lb.)	3.80	3.80
Zinc Stearate (g)	1.80	1.80
Pre-Puff Lubrication		---
Pre-Puff Weight (lb)	0.65	0.65
PE 1000 T6 (g)	---	2.95
Pre-Puff Density (pcf)	3.88	3.88
Rim Strength (kg)	0.301	0.301
ATF (hour)	1.5	39

Example 5 shows that cups (Sample XVII) formed with particles that were coated or covered with the coating composition of the invention had improved ATF compared to the control cups (Sample XVI) formed with particles covered or coated only with zinc stearate.

Example 6

Expandable polystyrene beads (NOVA Chemical F271TU) were first blended with liquid polyethylene glycol 400 (PEG 400) in a Ross ribbon mini-blender 42N-1/4S (Charles Ross & Son Company, Hauppauge, New York). These PEG coated beads were then coated with a polyethylene wax in the amounts shown in Table 6 and selected from one of the following types of waxes: 1) PE 1000 T6, which is a polyethylene wax having an average molecular weight of about 1000 and a particle size of about 6 microns; 2) PE 850 T10, which is a polyethylene wax having an average molecular weight of about 850 and a particle size of about 10 microns; 3) PE 655 T10, which is a polyethylene wax having an average molecular weight of about 655 and a particle size of about 10 microns; and 4) PE 500 T60, which is a polyethylene wax having an average molecular weight of about 500 and a particle size of about 60 microns. Zinc

5 stearate (ZnS) was used on all samples in the
amounts shown in Table 6. The polyethylene waxes
are obtained from the Baker Petrolite Corporation
under the trademark PETROLITE®.

10 Five samples (XVIII-XXII) were prepared by the
following procedure:

8 pounds of the impregnated, expandable
polystyrene cup beads, ranging from 0.010 to 0.020
inch in diameter and containing 5.6% by weight,
based on the weight of the particles, of normal
15 pentane and liquid PEG 400 in the amounts shown in
Table 6 were blended in the mini-blender for 10
minutes. The components of the solid part of the
coating composition in the amounts shown in Table 6
were added to this mixture and the contents were
20 further blended for another 10 minutes.

The impregnated, coated beads were pre-expanded
in an 11-gallon Rodman Steam pre-expander (Artisan
Industries Inc.) at atmospheric pressure. The pre-
expansion was operated batch wise with a target pre-
25 puff density of 4.0 - 4.5 pounds per cubic foot
(pcf). The newly prepared pre-puff was air dried
for 5 minutes to remove the moisture and was allowed
to age for about 4 hours before molding.

30 Sixteen-ounce cups were molded using a Master
Cup Machine M10 (Master Machine & Tool Co.,
Mulberry, FL) under standard molding conditions. The
pre-expanded beads had the densities indicated in
Table 6. The steam header pressure was 100 pounds
per square inch (psi) and the total cycle time was
35 about 14.8 seconds. The molded cups were allowed to
age overnight before testing.

5 Four cups for each sample (XVIII-XXII) were
 tested by the following method: 1) In a method
 similar to that set forth for Examples 1-4, oil
 fried pre-shaped Nissin cup noodles, available in
 the US market, were placed in each cup. 2) 3 grams
 10 of red pepper powder were spread evenly onto the
 noodle surface. 3) Each cup was tightly sealed with
 an adhesive label and plastic stretch film, and
 placed in the oven at a temperature of 149°F (65°C).
 4) Each sample was checked for stains first every
 15 hour during a 7 hour period and then once every 8
 hours until failure for a total of 72 hours or 3
 days.

The average time to failure (ATF) was
 calculated similar to that set forth in Example 1.
 20 The maximum ATF value of 72 hours represents that
 none of the cups for the cup group sampling
 exhibited any stain or leakage. The minimum ATF
 value of 1 hour represents that all of the cups in
 the cup group sampling failed within the first 1
 25 hour.

The results for the stain resistance, in terms
 of ATF, are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Sample	XVIII (Control)	XIX	XX	XXI	XXII
F271TU (lb)	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0
PEG 400 (g)	10.9	10.9	10.9	10.9	10.9
PE 1000 T6 (g)	-	14.5	-	-	-
PE 850 T10 (g)	-	-	14.5	-	-
PE 655 T10 (g)	-	-	-	14.5	-
PE 500 T60 (g)	-	-	-	-	14.5
ZnS (g)	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8
Density (pcf)	4.07	4.39	4.36	4.50	4.36
ATF (hour)	1.8	41	23	28	30

5 As Table 6 indicates, cups formed with
impregnated polystyrene particles that were coated
or covered with the coating composition of the
invention (Samples XIX-XXII) had improved ATF
compared to the control cups (Sample XVIII) that
10 were formed with particles coated only with zinc
stearate.

Control Sample XVIII of Example 6 is compared
to the samples of Examples 7, 8, and 9.

Example 7

15 The procedure of Example 6 was repeated for
Example 7. The beads were coated or covered with
the components in the amounts shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Sample	XVIII (Control)	XXIII
F271TU (lb)	8.0	8.0
PEG 400 (g)	--	3.63
PEG 8000 (g)	---	7.26
ZnS (g)	3.8	9.07
Density (pcf)	4.07	4.02
ATF (hour)	1.8	72

20 As Table 7 indicates, the cups formed with the
expandable polystyrene particles having 5.6% by
weight, based on the weight of the beads, of normal
pentane as the sole blowing agent and that were
coated with the coating composition of the invention
(Sample XXIII) had improved ATF compared to the
25 control cups (Sample XVIII) that were formed with
beads coated only with zinc stearate.

Example 8

30 The procedure of Example 6 was repeated for
Example 8 with the components in the amounts shown
in Table 8. The coated beads were aged for 48 hours
before pre-expansion.

Table 8

Sample	XVIII (Control)	XXIV
F271TU (lb)	8.0	8.0
PEG 400 (g)	---	10.9
PE 1000 T60 (g)	---	14.5
ZnS (g)	3.8	3.8
Density (pcf)	4.07	3.98
ATF (hour)	1.8	48

As Table 8 indicates, the cups formed with the expandable polystyrene particles having 5.6% by weight, based on the weight of the beads, of normal pentane as the sole blowing agent that were coated or covered with the coating composition of the invention (Sample XXIV) had improved ATF compared to the control cups (Sample XVIII) that were formed with beads coated solely with zinc stearate.

Example 9

The procedure of Example 7 was repeated. PEG 8000 was substituted with ethylene bis-stearamide powder (available from the Crompton Corporation under the trade mark KEMAMIDE® W-40). The beads were coated or covered with the components in the amounts shown in Table 9.

Table 9

Sample	XVIII (Control)	XXV
F271TU (lb)	8.0	8.0
PEG 400 (g)	---	10.8
KEMAMIDE® W-40 (g)	---	14.5
ZnS (g)	3.8	3.8
Density (pcf)	4.07	4.18
ATF (hour)	1.8	26

As Table 9 indicates, the cups formed with the expandable polystyrene particles having 5.6% by weight, based on the weight of the beads, of normal

5 pentane as the sole blowing agent, that were coated with the coating composition of the invention (Sample XXV) had improved ATF compared to the control cups (Sample XVIII) that were formed with beads coated solely with zinc stearate.

10 Example 10

Expandable polystyrene beads (NOVA Chemical F271TU) were first blended with liquid polyethylene glycol 400 (PEG 400) in a drum mixer. These PEG coated beads were then coated with polyethylene wax and zinc stearate (ZnS) in the amounts shown in 15 Table 10. The polyethylene wax had an average molecular weight of about 1000 and a particle size of about 6 microns. (PE 1000 T6 obtained from Baker Petrolite under the trademark Petrolite®.)

20 Two samples (XXVI-XXVII) were prepared by the following procedure:

3.8 pounds of impregnated NOVA Chemicals F271TU (expandable polystyrene) cup beads, ranging from 0.010 to 0.020 inch in diameter and containing 5.6% 25 by weight, based on the weight of the particles, of normal pentane.

For sample XXVII, liquid PEG 400 in the amount shown in Table 10 was stir blended with the particles in a drum container for 5 minutes. The 30 polyethylene wax (PE 1000 T6) and zinc stearate in the amounts shown in Table 10 were added to this mixture and the contents were further blended for another 5 minutes.

The impregnated, coated beads were pre-expanded 35 in an 11-gallon Rodman Steam pre-expander (Artisan Industries Inc.) at atmospheric pressure. The pre-

5 expansion was operated batch wise with a target pre-puff density of 4.0 pounds per cubic foot (pcf). The newly prepared pre-puff was air dried for 5 minutes to remove the moisture and was allowed to age for about 4 hours before molding.

10 Ten-ounce cups were molded using Autonational Cup Machine Model 6VLC-125 (standard molding conditions) and using the pre-expanded beads having the densities indicated in Table 10. The steam header pressure was 100 pounds per square inch (psi) and the total cycle time was about 12 seconds. The
15 molded cups were allowed to age overnight before testing.

Ten cups for each sample (XXVI-XXVII) were tested by the following method: Coffee at 170°F was
20 poured into each cup and the side walls and bottom of each cup containing coffee were observed for coffee stains or leakage every 15 minutes for the first 2 hours, every one hour from 2 to 6 hours, and then every 8 hours until failure or for a maximum of
25 6 days.

The average time to failure (ATF) was calculated similar to that set forth in Example 1. The maximum ATF value of 144 hours represents that none of the cups for the cup group sampling
30 exhibited any stain or leakage. The minimum ATF value of 0.25 hour represents that all of the cups in the cup group sampling failed within the first 15 minutes.

The results for coffee resistance are shown in
35 Table 10.

Table 10

Sample	XXVI (Control)	XXVII
F271TU (lb)	3.8	3.8
PEG 400 (g)	-	5.17
PE 1000 T6 (g)	-	6.89
ZnS (g)	-	1.81
Density (pcf)	3.88	3.96
ATF (hour)	2.9	144

As Table 10 indicates, cups formed with impregnated polystyrene particles that were coated or covered with the coating composition of the invention (Sample XXVII) had improved ATF compared to the control cups (Sample XXVI) that were formed with particles coated solely with zinc stearate.

The impregnated thermoplastic particles coated or covered with the coating composition of the invention can be used to form foam containers that hold pre-packaged foods, e.g. instant noodles and/or soups, stews, meats, etc. that are sold on the shelves in the grocery store.

While the present invention has been set forth in terms of specific embodiments thereof, it will be understood in view of the instant disclosure that numerous variations upon the invention are now enabled yet reside within the scope of the invention. For example, even though foam containers are specifically described herein, it is to be understood, that the coating composition for thermoplastic resin particles may be used to form other types of molded articles. Accordingly, the invention is to be broadly construed and limited only by the scope and spirit of the claims now appended hereto.